

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY FREETOWN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2711

INFO AMEMBASSY LAGOS

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C O N F I D E N T I A L FREETOWN 0615

LONDON FOR SEITZ

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: AO, PFOR, US, NI

SUBJECT: EDITOR EXPLAINS WEST AFRICA'S MPLA BIAS

1. DAVID WILLIAMS, EDITOR OF WEEKLY MAGAZINE WEST AFRICA, VISITED SIERRA LEONE WEEK OF FEBRUARY 21-27. DURING SEVERAL CONVERSATIONS WITH AMBASSADOR, REASONS FOR MAGAZINE'S BIAS FOR THE MPLA EMERGED AS FOLLOWS:

A. WILLIAMS PERCEIVED BY MID-NOVEMBER THAT MPLA WOULD WIN, AND THEREFORE FELT IT "FOLLY" NOT TO SUPPORT THEM.

B. HIS MAGAZINE IS DEPENDENT ON NIGERIAN GOODWILL; ALTHOUGH SET IN THE UK, IT IS ACTUALLY PRINTED IN LAGOS. FURTHERMORE, NIGERIAN DISTRIBUTION IS VITAL TO FINANCIAL STATUS OF MAGAZINE, AND HE BELIEVED THE NIGERIANS CAPABLE OF INTERFERING WITH SMOOTH DISTRIBUTION.

C. HE HONESTLY FELT THAT THE WEST WAS SHORT-SIGHTED BY APPEARING TO OPPOSE THE STRONGEST OF

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THE POLITICAL PARTIES. HE FELT THAT WHATEVER

INFLUENCE THE USSR MIGHT HAVE BECAUSE OF THE
POLITICAL LEANINGS OF THE MPLA LEADERS, WOULD
ONLY HAVE BEEN INCREASED IF USSR WERE NOT JOINED
BY SOME FROM WEST IN SUPPORTING MPLA.
SAMUELS

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NNN

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